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PM, NEA, S/I, EUR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2027

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [BU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: FM APPRECIATES IRAQ WITHDRAWAL PLAN,
REQUESTS INFO ON PUBLIC RELEASE

REF: STATE 96122

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 5.

12. (S) Summary. Ambassador informed FM Kalfin that Bulgaria's participation in the Coalition will not be required beyond 2008. Noting that the Iraqi military will require time to assume the mission Bulgarian forces are currently performing, she requested that Bulgarian troops remain in place through the end of the current deployment, scheduled to conclude on December 31, 2008. She also urged him to consider a shift in troops and resources toward Afghanistan as Bulgarian operations in Iraq wind down. Kalfin welcomed the news that Bulgarian troops would not be asked to stay into 2009, and agreed that a shift toward Afghanistan is the right idea. The Foreign Minister asked about our plans for public release of this information, stressing the importance of presenting it to the Bulgarian public in a positive light. End Summary.

13. (S) In a September 9 conversation with Ambassador, Foreign Minister Kalfin expressed approval for the plan to withdraw Bulgarian troops from Iraq at the end of 2008 when their current legal mandate expires. He also thanked the Ambassador for the early notification of this decision. Bulgarian troops would serve out the remainder of their mission at Camp Cropper, he thought, returning home at the end of the year, as had been envisioned by the Bulgarian Parliament earlier this year.

14. (S) Kalfin looked positively on the idea of shifting greater attention to Afghanistan as the withdrawal from Iraq began. Ambassador reiterated previous U.S. and NATO requests for Bulgaria to send two OMLTs and a Class Two Military Medical Facility in support of ISAF. Kalfin noted that the Council of Minister's decision last week to approve, in principle, the deployment of Bulgaria's first OMLT to Afghanistan was a step in this direction. He implied that further increases might be possible, but did not commit to specific additional deployments. Kalfin stressed that the Bulgarian Government was determined to be a good security partner.

15. (S) Action Request: Kalfin's primary concern was public roll out. The Bulgarians are willing to follow our lead, and Kalfin requested information as soon as possible.

16. (S) Background: A 152-soldier Bulgarian contingent currently performs a perimeter security mission for a

detention facility at Camp Cropper, subordinate to U.S. Military Police battalion. These troops arrived in June 2008 after transferring, at our request, from a similar mission at Camp Ashraf, where they had served since 2006. Prior to the Ashraf mission, five Bulgarian infantry companies rotated through Iraq on 6-month stints, sustaining 13 KIAs and 81 WIAs. Bulgaria currently has 470 troops deployed to Afghanistan, including 270 in Kandahar. An additional 117 soldiers are deployed to Bosnia and 42 to Kosovo.

McEldowney